

Navy announces Athletes of the Year

By Lt. j.g. Eric Peterson
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The Navy's Athletes of the Year were recognized at the Pride of the Nation Ceremony in Arlington, Va., earlier this month.

The Navy's top athletes for 2000 are Lt. j.g. Bridget Stamp-Ruiz and Ensign Michael Ryan.

Each branch of the armed forces honored their top male and female athletes at the banquet, which is sponsored by the U.S. Military Sports Association. On hand to congratulate the athletes were senior flag-level officers from all branches of the armed forces, including Rear Adm. Marianne Drew, deputy commander of Navy Personnel Command in Millington, Tenn.

"This gives us an opportunity to honor our armed forces athletes and allow them to meet our supporters," said John Hickok, head of Navy Sports. "The Navy's awardees were selected from a group of outstanding athletes who were nominated by their respective commands," he explained.

The Navy's Male Athlete of the Year, Ensign Michael Ryan, is assigned to Navy Nuclear Power Training Command in Goose Creek, S.C. His athletic achievements over the past year include a second-place finish in the 3,000-meter run at the U.S. Track and Field Indoor National Championships, and a ninth-place finish in the 1,500-meter run at the U.S. Olympic Trials.

The Navy's Female Athlete of the Year, Lt. j.g. Bridget Stamp-Ruiz, is assigned to USS Duluth (LPD 6), homeported in San Diego, Calif. Stamp-Ruiz repeated as world champion in the 2000 Naval Pentathlon World Championships in Berga, Sweden, the first U.S. woman to accomplish this feat.

For more information about the Athletes of the Year Program or Navy Sports, contact John Hickok at the Navy Sports Office, (901) 874-6632/DSN 882.

Information is also available on the Navy Sports web page at <http://www.mwr.navy.mil/mwrprgms/sports.htm>

Elam: Medical Dept. Sailor appears on 'Montel' Show

(Continued from pg. 1)

Medical Center in Fort Lewis, Wash. recommended that she go for radiation treatment and chemotherapy.

Meanwhile, Abraham Lincoln was getting ready to depart for the Arabian Gulf. Elam's chief, HMCS Bob Spottswood and Abe's command master chief, CMOMC (SS/SW/AW) William Nissen suggested that Elam should not deploy with the ship and instead get TAD orders to remain with his wife.

But, together, Patti and Michael made the decision that he should go ahead with the deployment. "It was in his best interests for his family and his career path," recalls Patti.

"I definitely wanted to stay," said Michael. "But it was most important to me to do what Patti wanted."

Patti and Michael met in 1991 when they were both attending Preventive Medicine Technician School in Oakland, Calif. They were married shortly thereafter. Both were Navy Hospital Corpsmen at the time, and Patti remained on active duty until their first daughter, Karin was 2 years old.

The Elams have three children, Karin who is now 8, a son, Jens, 6, and another daughter Elizabeth, 3. Since reporting to Abraham Lincoln a year ago,

Petty Officer Elam has been assigned to the Medical "H" Division.

So, when word went out that "The Montel Williams Show" was looking for a Navy couple to reunite for their Christmas Special, "We were to nominate deserving people," said Nissen, who felt that Elam was the best choice.

"We were sending him home - regardless," Spottswood added. "But Patti was the motivating factor. We know she was looking out after her husband and her kids."

But little did Patti know that she would be reunited face-to-face with her husband while she was at "The Montel Williams Show." According to Tracy Frissora, senior associate producer, "Our greatest joy was seeing Patti's face when Elam came walking out of the door to surprise her. Bringing Patti and Michael together for the holidays is one of Montel's greatest accomplishments to date."

Montel Williams and the show's corporate sponsors presented the Elam family with a variety of gifts, including video games, bicycles and toys for the kids.

"I can't thank the Navy enough for always being there for us and assisting us in every way possible to make our shows better - and to make someone

happy for the holidays," said Frissora, the show's senior associate producer, "If I had my wish, we'd bring a sailor home every week!"

But there was more.

When Montel Williams and the show's producers found out that the alternator on Patti's car died, they teamed up with Hyundai Motors America to present the Elams with a brand-new 2001 Hyundai Sonata.

As an added surprise, Karin was waiting backstage while her mother and father were reunited. Karin could hardly restrain her excitement as she ran on stage to greet her father with a bear hug.

"I'm really excited to see Dad and know that he's going to be home for Christmas."

Then she turned to Michael and added, "I miss you and love you! I just can't believe that you're here!"

The latest prognosis from Patti's oncologist is optimistic. He said that the cancer is not terminal and there's a good chance of it not recurring with proper treatment and follow-up.

And Elam has been given TAD orders to the Bremerton Naval Hospital so he can be with his family while Patti continues her treatments.